

THE MEADOW.

Here when the cloudless April days begin,
And the quaint crows flock thicker day by day,
Filling the forests with a pleasant din,
And the soiled snow creeps secretly away,
Comes the small busy sparrow, primed with glee,
First preacher in the naked wilderness,
Piping an end to all the long distress
From every fence and every leafless tree.

Now with soft slight and viewless artifice
Winter's iron work is wondrously undone ;
In all the little hollows cored with ice
The clear brown pools stand simmering in the sun,
Frail lucid worlds, upon whose tremulous floors
All day the wandering water-bugs at will,
Shy mariners whose oars are never still,
Voyage and dream about the heightening shores .

The bluebird peeping from the gnarled thorn
Prattles upon his frolic flute, or flings,
In bounding flight across the golden morn,
An azure gleam from off his splendid wings,
Here the slim-pinioned swallows sweep and pass
Down to the far off river ; the black crow
With wise and wary visage to and fro
Settles and stalks about the withered grass.

Here when the murmurous May-day is half gone
The watchful lark before my feet takes flight,
And wheeling to some lonelier field far on,
Drops with obstreperous cry ; and here at night,
When the first star precedes the great red moon,
The shore-lark tinkles from the darkening field,
Somewhere we know not in the dusk concealed,
His little creakling and continuous tune.

Here too the robins, lusty as of old,
Hunt the waste grass for forage, or prolong
From every quarter of these fields the bold,
Blithe phrases of their never finished song.
The white-throat's distant descant with slow stress,
Note after note upon the noonday falls,
Filling the leisured air at intervals
With his own mood of piercing pensiveness.

Often, how often, from this upland perch,
Mine eyes have seen the forest break in bloom,
The rose-red maple and the golden birch,
The dusty yellow of the elms, the gloom
Of the tall poplar hung with tasseled black,
Ah, I have watched, till eye and ear and brain
Grew full of dreams as they, the moted plain,
The sun-steeped wood, the marshland at its back,

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The valley where the river wheels and fills,
Yon city glimmering in its smoky shroud,
And out at the last misty rim the hills
Blue and far off and mounded like a cloud,
And here the noisy rutted road that goes
Down the slope yonder, flanked on either side
With the smooth-furrowed fields flung black and wide,
Patched with pale water sleeping in the rows.

So as I watched the crowded leaves expand,
The bloom break sheathe, the summer's strength uprear
In earth's great mother's heart already planned
The heaped and burgeoned plenty of the year,
Even as she from out her wintered hearse
My spirit also sprang to life anew,
And day by day as the spring's bounty grew,
The fabric'd dream unlocked the fount of verse.

In reverie by day and midnight dream
I sought these upland fields and walked apart,
Musing on nature, till my thought did seem
To read the very secrets of her heart ;
In mooded moments earnest and sublime
I stored the themes of many a future song,
Whose substance should be nature's clear and strong,
Bound in casket of majestic rhyme.

Brave bud-like plans that never reached the fruit,
Like her's our mother's who with every hour,
Easily replenished from the sleepless root,
Covers her bosom with fresh bud and flower ;
Yet I was happy as young lovers be,
Who in the season of their passion's birth
Deem that they have their utmost worship's worth,
If love be near them, just to hear and see.

SUNSET AT LES EBOULEMENTS.

Broad shadows fall. On all the mountain side
The scythe-swept fields are silent. Slowly home
By the long beach the high-piled hay carts come,
Splashing the pale salt shallows. Over wide
Fawn coloured wastes of mud the slipping tide,
Round the dun rocks and wattled fisheries,
Creeps murmuring in. And now by twos and threes,
O'er the slow-spreading pools with clamorous chide,
Belated crows from strip to strip take flight.
Soon will the first star shine ; yet ere the night
Reach onward to the pale green distances,
The sun's last shaft beyond the grey sea-floor
Still dreams upon the Kamouraska shore,
And the long line of golden villages.

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